



#13
delay to next agenda
OK w/Scott

**Request for City Council Committee Action
FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

Date: July 22, 2002
To: Transportation and Public Works Committee
Referral to: None
Subject: Proposed Conversion of Hennepin Avenue Conversion to a Two Way Operation

Recommendation:

The following process be approved to study the potential for converting Hennepin Avenue (and possibly 1st Avenue North) from one-way to two-way operations:

1. Hire an air quality consultant to work with the MPCA to determine under what conditions they would approve the two-way conversion and to conduct any air quality studies required by the MPCA prior to approval.
2. Work with MnDOT and Hennepin County to determine the process required to secure their approval of the conversion.
3. Work with Metro Transit to determine the impacts of a two-way conversion and measures necessary to mitigate and address potential impacts.
4. Hire a transportation consultant to study the impacts of a Hennepin Avenue/1st Avenue North two-way conversion on roadway congestion, traffic operations, truck loading, accidents, parking, bike lane loss, signing, and any other pertinent issues. The consultant would also be required to develop proposals and cost estimates to mitigate the identified impacts.

Prepared or Submitted by: Greg Finstad, P.E.

Approved by: David J. Sonnenberg, P.E. City Engineer, Director of Public Works

By: Greg Finstad *Greg Finstad*

Presenters in Committee: Greg Finstad, Director of Transportation and Parking Services

Financial Impact (Check those that apply)

☐ No financial impact (If checked, go directly to Background/Supporting Information)

☐ Action requires an appropriation increase to the Capital Budget

☐ Action requires an appropriation increase to the Operating Budget

☐ Action provides increased revenue for appropriation increase

☐ Action requires use of contingency or reserves

☒ Other financial impact (Explain):

☐ Request provided to the Budget Office when provided to the Committee Coordinator

Background/Supporting Information

Reporting upon the request of Council Member Benson and the Transportation and Public Works Committee to study the potential for changing Hennepin Avenue in downtown Minneapolis from a one-way street to a two-way operation. This will include an outline of the steps or process to be followed when studying this potential change.

As you are aware Hennepin Avenue currently operates as a northerly bound one-way street for general traffic with a reverse flow transit lane and a two-way bicycle lane. This one-way operation exists from 11th Street South to 2nd Street South. This unique arrangement was established on September 4, 1980 and was implemented with the concurrent conversion of 1st Avenue North to a southerly bound one-way street creating a one-way pair. The Hennepin/1st Avenue North conversion to a one-way pair was the result of a long series of negotiations with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to deal with the air quality concerns in downtown Minneapolis. The Minneapolis City Council, and Minneapolis Downtown Council supported the one way conversion provided it included a reverse flow transit lane that would allow transit to remain on Hennepin Avenue, in both directions, for the convenience of transit users. This system has proved to be a very efficient transit improvement to Hennepin Avenue and downtown. Ultimately the roadway conversions were required by the MPCA as follows:

1. To relieve congestion at the 7th Street South and Hennepin Avenue intersection prior to issuance of an Indirect Source Permit to the Metropolitan Stadium Commission for construction of the Downtown Minneapolis Stadium.
2. As a required strategy in the Minnesota State Implementation Plan (SISP) to meet the Federal EPA 1982 carbon monoxide requirements specified in the 1977 Clean Air Act Amendment.

Any proposal to covert Hennepin Avenue and/or 1st Avenue North back to a two-way operation would have to deal with these legal documents and determine the consequences of violating these provisions. Initial general discussions with an MPCA representative

indicated that their agency was unlikely to approve the conversion because it is part of the State Implementation Plan. They feel they cannot support the conversion unless extensive traffic flow modeling proved that the conversion would not result in an increase in emissions in excess of air quality standards extending out 20 years. In addition, modeling would be required to show no significant impacts on adjacent streets resulting from any diverted traffic.

Any air quality violations in Downtown Minneapolis could result in the designation of the region as a non-attainment area – severely limiting future development projects.

A capacity analysis will need to be done to analyze the impacts of a two-way conversion. Northbound capacity will be reduced, more congestion will occur and left turns movements will be difficult. This means a special traffic management study would need to be done to determine if any traffic control strategies could be utilized to mitigate the traffic flow problems. Metro Transit will need to be consulted with to ascertain the impacts of the loss of the transit lane on bus operations, schedules, and bus stops. A determination will need to be made regarding 1st Avenue North in terms of whether or not it should/must be involved in the two-way conversion and, if so, what impacts will result, such as loss of parking, special zones, turn lanes, etc.

Other issues requiring study include the following:

1. Truck Loading Implications: curb space will be at a premium in a two-way scenario and truck-loading operations will need to be reviewed.
2. Accident rates are higher on major two-way roadways and should be a consideration in any review process.
3. Loss of the two-way bicycle lane on Hennepin Avenue. This facility is a major part of the Minneapolis Bicycle Plan and was developed after considerable debate, negotiation, and expense. It serves as the backbone of the downtown on-street Bicycle Route System, a distributor for linking bicycle commuters from the off-street system to the on-street system, and as the designated route for bicyclists after bicycle use was prohibited on the Nicollet Mall. Loss of the key element to the bicycle plan would require creation of an alternative route.

Hennepin Avenue is a Municipal State Aid (MSA) route south of Washington Avenue and a County State Aid (CSA) route north of Washington Avenue. First Avenue North is an MSA route its entire length. Accordingly, any conversion of these streets from a one-way to two-way operation would require approval from MnDOT and Hennepin County.

Lastly, if the conversion to two-way operation is approved, a cost estimate and funding source needs to be determined. This would include, but not be limited to: traffic signal modifications, signing changes, seal coating to accommodate lane modifications, lane stripping/painting and any other operations costs to implement the conversion on Hennepin Avenue/1st Avenue North and any other affected adjacent streets/avenues.



July 15, 2002

Mr. Greg Finstad
Director, Transportation and Parking Services
City of Minneapolis
350 South 5th Street – Room 233
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1314

Dear Mr. Finstad,

We understand the City of Minneapolis is considering reverting Hennepin Avenue from its current one-way configuration to a two-way street. As you know, downtown Minneapolis has, by far, the highest volume of transit patronage in the region. Hennepin Avenue, with its contraflow bus lane, is a critical component of the downtown transit network.

Each weekday more than 13,000 passenger trips are taken on buses using Hennepin Avenue. Using the regional vehicle occupancy rate of 1.2 passengers per vehicle, these transit riders equate to a reduction of almost 11,000 single occupancy vehicle trips. More than 200 bus trips travel southbound on Hennepin during the weekday afternoon peak period (3:00 – 6:30 PM) with 70 alone during the peak hour (4:30 – 5:30 PM).

Hennepin Avenue also serves as a reliable detour route when the Nicollet Mall is closed. For example, in 2001, Nicollet Mall buses were detoured to Hennepin more than 60 days during Nicollet Mall special events such as Holidazzle, the St. Patrick's Parade and Ribfest as well as construction detours.

Based on our experience, we know that bus trip travel times will increase significantly if Hennepin Avenue becomes a two-way street and the contraflow bus lane is eliminated. A slower trip makes transit a less attractive alternative to current and potential riders traveling to/from downtown Minneapolis resulting in more vehicles on already congested streets.

Because of its critical role, Metro Transit requests that the City weigh the transit impact when making any decisions regarding Hennepin Avenue operations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Michael H. Setzer'.

Michael H. Setzer
General Manager

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